

o·blek



o·blēk/1

A JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE ARTS

'oblique (*o·blēk*) *adj.* **1:** neither perpendicular nor parallel: INCLINED **2:** not straightforward: INDIRECT

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o·blēk is

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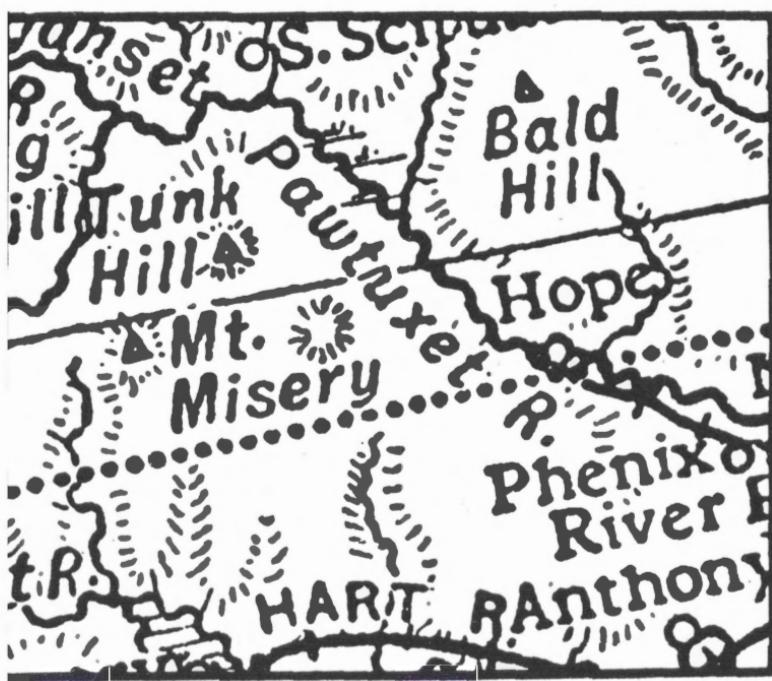
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This issue is given to Keith Waldrop,
poet of Providence.



OPENING POEM

Until the proper moment, which will be given by the violins, he is held in the wings, but his leap already tones the appropriate muscles. He is just far enough back—poised in a way that might be taken for awkwardness—that his view of the stage is framed and remote.

Things close to him tend to cling. He has grown accustomed to moving through an impinging foreground, asserting his shoulders to remain at large. Now, however, figures around him, part of the machinery, flatten to shadows—his attention is to a bright rectangle. From the *other side* it is a window but for him an entrance, through which he peers into a volume greater than this theatre.

When he walks, his world reshapes, in exact relation to his own displacement. Disproportion follows every movement of his eyes, plunging before him, an erratic and inevitable pattern, restructured by each irregularity.

But he always leapt well. It is a family characteristic, acquired through generations.

“My father,” he says, “can jump higher than his father.

“But I go higher.

“My children—or their children—will fly.” When he thinks, he solves problems, or fails to, but his physical movements are pure fantasy.

A theme converts the dividing flat into a passageway and an intellectual grace imposes its arc. Giving himself to the tone, he leaps, and—the muscles having thrust aside all visible evidence of distance, gravity, succession in time—he appears to the sudden house as if suspended.

from *The Quest For Mount Misery*
by Keith Waldrop



KEITH WALDROP

CHARACTERISTIC PIECES
FROM *TRANSCENDENTAL STUDIES*
THE FOUNTAIN OF QUIET

1

Le Sieur de Sainte Colombe: we do not know his given names, what year he was born, when he will die. In the year 1680, we find, he is an “illustrious amateur.”

Amateur, that is to say, on the viols, of which he is the earliest French master.

And, amateur though he may be, he has students, including Marin Marais, who after a mere six months of study plays so staggeringly well that it is clear the master will, sooner or later, be outdistanced, is excelled already in clarity of tone.

Sainte Colombe, in obscure dread of this disciple, declares the lessons ended. There is no more, he announces, to teach or be taught. False—as the student perfectly well knows.

And come summer, to escape the heat of his studio, and to be more private, the master has gone into the garden, built a tree-house from rough planks, and—certain he is unheard—gives himself over to the delights of his viols, there among the branches of a giant mulberry.

But the student, student-wise, finds a way through the building, across the studio, into the garden, where—on the roots of the mulberry, pressed against its trunk—he is astounded by streams of music and hears in the music (what no one else could) bowings and fingerings the master had hoped to keep for himself.

And from this same Marais comes the storm that rages through so many operas...

2

There is an exercise which, for a time, I found of interest, but have not practiced for years: I counted, for instance, the pipes of a radiator, thus adding to the object a number, say fifteen. Then, slowly or all of a sudden—depending on the distinctness of the object, its difficulty—I removed the number, leaving before me a nest of pipes and sending *fifteen*, bodiless, into some limbo of rejected figures. It was an exercise that changed nothing, neither the radiator, nor me, nor the infinite numerical series.

I have always counted steps as I go up or down them, not as a means towards any end, just a thing to do. I rarely remember even those I climb most often, to the second floor of my house, or the third floor of Adams. And sometimes there comes a vague feeling, as I reach the top, or bottom, that it is not the same number as usual. But I can't be sure. (I can negotiate them in darkness. I know just where they turn, and exactly how the landings interpose.)

Empty ritual, added to actions (how many minutes have I lived? have I to live?), just as for every pain a ceremony attends, above or below, waiting for the pain to climb up or come down.

3

To be deep in thought. To act rashly, inconsiderately, without thinking, without forethought. Carelessly. It is worth thinking over. It requires consideration. It wanted thinking out. On reflection you will change your mind.

The blood surged to her cheeks. The water washed up on to the bank. The fugitives poured into Switzerland.

One cannot change one's nature.

The troops are returning.

The bolt refuses. Stemming of the tide. To drive back an instinct into the unconscious.

Cashiering.

The tide is ebbing.

4

In my camp-meeting days, I met an evangelist named Trueblood, whose sermons consisted almost entirely of cited scripture. But he never took his Bible into the pulpit when he preached, didn't need to, because he had made a deal with the Lord.

"Lord," he had said, "engrave your words on my heart, and I'll put all else out of mind."

And as he pored over the Text, he found he could see it still, even if he shut his eyes. Gradually, as he applied himself, a little more each day, he got so he could read the Book without looking, when it was shut, when it was not there.

5

Someone gets out of a car. Night. And I see it from above, out a window. The car door slams, extinguishing an interior. Turn signals flashing, before and behind, the car pulls out, and out of sight. Tiny red lights lost. And what happened to the one who got out—while I was tailing the car?

Since I am writing this down, I will not remember it. Replaced now by a paragraph, turned into schema: dictionaries weigh on it, old classrooms and dead teachers—and the feel of prose that has, over the years, formed in front of my eyes.

If I don't write, I will remember nothing at all.

It's easy to imagine the car stopping—night, traffic, streetlamps, someone gets out, door slams, she is going into the hotel next door.

I've lost the car's vanishing, though it is no longer there, and I get no farther.

6

. . . the bass performed not only by bassoon and lower strings but also by loosely strung drums rolled continually, a muffled and lugubrious sound contrasting with high-pitched, piercing notes from the oboes and the *chanterelle* of the violins.

Early evening, it was not yet dark, we were walking towards Chinatown—Linda, Nelson, Rosmarie and I—to which restaurant I can't remember, and it may well have been one which has, since then, folded. I was trying to imagine my life, our lives, but imagination is not my forte (whereas, the right text in front of me, I can usually do well enough by it). It may have been late spring, possibly early fall—I recall weather for walking.

For some reason, as I think back, Canal Street appears in a fine realism (this is not imaginary, it is memory) so clear as to seem artificial—like the orb of a spider with black velvet behind it.

Less delineated: we pedestrians, stragglers, together and yet scarcely organized.

On one corner, a couple were wrangling over a stubborn child—infant, actually—who refused to walk, demanding to be carried. I would not have retained this element, if the woman had not shouted, “Well, if you’re going to be that way, I’ll just give you away to this lady coming here,” sweeping the child up and, in a single arc, into Linda’s arms, which in reflex opened and accepted the surprise.

And there was a moment of pause, everyone caught in abrupt change. And the child recovered first, in the grip of a stranger, and screamed. As any of us would. As anyone might.

Not many minutes after the boat's pushing off, to the vexation of all, the wind entirely died away, and the tide turning, began drifting back the ship helplessly seaward. And the worst of it, and the root of it all, was that it was all in accord with the normal fundamental laws of overacute consciousness, and with the inertia that was the direct result of those laws, and that consequently one was not only unable to change but could do absolutely nothing. The wallpaper hung in tatters, and quivered in the drafts.

"Come with me. I want to speak to you before it begins," said the widow. "Give me your arm." I forget what answer I made to this—I was given up to two other reflections. It is not in vain that age-old folk-experience teaches that no man is certain of escaping the beggar's sack or prison. A night in a *wagon-lit*, three or four weeks of lotus-eating at some one of the gay world's playgrounds in the lovely south...

She broke out into a peal of laughter and glanced at her husband, whose admiring and happy eyes had been wandering from her dress to her face and hair. Now he had progressed so far that, by sharply accentuating his swinging movement, he felt he was nearly losing his balance; he would have to take a serious decision, for in five minutes it would be a quarter to eight—but suddenly there was a knock at the front door.

The months passed, the dark evenings came, heavy, dark November, when March went about in high boots, ankle deep in mud, when the night began to fall at four o'clock, and the day never properly dawned.

9

Whatever I see can only be what there is to see. And I remember how the frog's eye tells the frog's brain, not even of all flies—let alone the surrounding manifold—but only of those in flight: catchable, fresh, *eatable* flies. What the frog's belly *needs*. And I too, I must suppose, see no farther than my own necessities.

And must, by the same token, need everything I see.

10

Feeling heroic, I walk downtown, confronting the towers of various banks.

As I cross the bridge, the widest wind assaults me: dust stings my eyes. On the far side I am met by ghosts of department stores and the ghost of old Dana—surrounded by second-hand books in ashes—saying yes he remembers him, “peculiar fellow, that Lovecraft.”

Hurricane past, blizzard not yet here—lines under the Turk’s Head mark levels of flood.

The direction Providence would now take seems to be *up*. I drift through the Arcade. Under College Hill there are tunnels for discontinued trains. There, in the dark, derelicts sleep along the ties, their heads on rusty rails. And lower forms live there—rats, reptiles—and, according to Lovecraft, something in between: creatures erect once, beasts again.

from TRANSCENDENTAL STUDIES

1

Fate is cleverer than the king
of Babylon. Shadows of yew
fall through windows onto

the floor of the nave and
touch the pillars with tattered
shade. You claim the dearest wish of your

life is to sink in a soul-freezing
situation of horror. The music of a crash
caught in the hollow of a wooded hillside.

2

Grave, questioning sweep—chiefly the weird
that arouses our keenest hopes. The garden of
dreams contains a summer-house, hazy

period of my growth. There are bodies,
not greatly extended, called seas nevertheless,
because of their depth and

violence. I've some little
doubt about this ceremony entirely
embedded in a cup of grassy hills.

3

Pardon me for loitering. I was sleeping soundly when I was roused by the loud clang of what turned out to be

a large brass candlestick, flung against the bannister. Unprotected, destitute of the means of self-defense, you

hug to yourself the consciousness of vanished beauty. The sea is uncertain, on the main and also along the coast.

4

**Strange rooms. Through these experimental
years, who can describe beauty
in the dead of night? Complain of**

**frivolity or of portraits exactly
like ghosts. The waters of the great
surrounding sea will completely**

**evaporate when the sun opens the fifth
of its seven eyes. Oh yes, I take
pleasure in backgrounds, bringing them forward.**

5

These are only a few of many
legendary details, called from the distant
future where each thing has its

end, including sea, sun, the eyes.
You live in another season—even now I
feel acrobatic instincts. Large strange

rooms. A silver cup from his household
plate, a sky of the same
gray tones, a great wilderness of books.

6

When the sea subsides into utter
calm, changing clouds caught in its
clarity, then fishermen say the sea

is thinking about itself. A dark back
room, looking down upon a narrow
courtyard—waking out of some

dream of spectres, bellowing the most
frightful shrieks, forgetting only
at the sound of somebody's voice.

7

You light me to bed with your light, and
never a night but I am
prey to ghostly visions—a tenderness

not usual in my family. The lion
pauses a certain space of time, amid
a sea of divers thoughts, choppy half-

desires, memoranda of search
and hunger, very peculiar
ideas of the world.

THE FOUNTAIN OF QUIET

A feeling of smooth functioning. Straight lines are infinite and if I were to follow one, there could be no arrival. Water, stretched till like a rope it breaks of its own weight.

A genuinely restful state—leisurely, contemplative. Each element to its natural level. Not a word about physical properties. The earth turns less and less quickly; day by day, each day is longer.

A great deal of rain begins as snow, melting in its fall. There are many accounts which we must accept or reject on their own merits—it being impossible, through distance in time or other obscurity, to get behind the report to a more factual view of things.

From infancy we remember nothing, or very little. Analysts insist on explaining this—they go so far as to give reasons why we do not recall the womb, which they suppose veritable Eden. They must not realize, what seems obvious, that memory itself is learned. Pigeonholes are not all that easy to come by—as, later, they are hard to demolish—and without them nothing can be stashed away, let alone drawn out again.

Here on the rim of the basin, the spray—shifting as it does with every breath of wind—avoids me for a time and then flings its damp against me. It is not loud—the water spurting up, dispersing into foam, falling again lightly—but such noise as it makes, a high white splash, stills my internal chatter, covers over the fag-ends of my thought where anxieties collect to murmur and mutter.

Oceans of spider-silk. Various materials, depending on the pressure to be withstood. A doctrine of movement. A doctrine of place. And about fire. Allegedly underlying equally intelligible disturbance. Comparatively little more than vacuum: intrinsic beauty, gelatinous, infolded.

Order predominates, as Theophrastus noted, only in the heavens and in the heaven of mathematics. A slow influx of ideas may gather speed, like any natural course of things, flowing faster at the surface than along the bottom. The spray cools me, seems somehow to be listening—its sound so general, so unarticulated.

The glory of our midden: a long
trajectory of high
tech debris. Copper, bronze, bored
stone. Tides in narrow
straits. Colossal sonic booms should
pervade the lower atmosphere. Lord
of Eternity, within thy ship...

There is a problem with trains of thought. They have to be stopped before they end as mere cadence, waves against the shore, clickety-clack, something solely for the inner ear. A delay is necessary at both transfer points: where a stone hefted is the stone's weight, and where the stone is—at a remove—the thing called stone.

The tendency of sprouts, against the perpendicular. Ascending air necessarily cools. Nothing can happen which might not lead to catastrophe. Unfree. Buffeted. Vacillating. Live height of the water. A theory of overflow.

Tuning between parts. Blue-black of the sea. Isis on the Rhine. Isis on the Danube. There is no doubt about this: excitement caught, unable to spread, will find some other tonal valley and flow there like a stream. Extra-cellular space. Succession of shapes.

Unclassified properties, patches of white, tend not to lie, as it seems they should, within their own dark outline, but appear larger than they are, projecting outside the supposed area, demanding other planes. So long as I am neither asleep nor at rest, I am occupied with something. A vapor goes up, little bubbles of water filled with fire.

CLAUDE ROYET-JOURNOUD

MOURNING: PERIOD OF INVASION

gauze pressed over the mouth

“falls away from the fable”

if he speaks
in the midst of the image

the cold obstructs his articulation

*commerce
in the objects of memory*

closest to the event
for him she takes the place of the alphabet

on the mouth left open
a description was its image

(Of objects we know only
slowness, different divi-
sion. Force finds a stage.
Fear of falling.)

(They leave again, darken the
air. No landscape. Space
stops mourning's tongue.)

the mother

each piece

like a mutilation

**if he talks he no longer shifts
neighbor to a thirst**

**instruments of welcome
in generations**

a day's measurements

**(Between water and wall, a voice recaptures place.
The whole alphabet of body and loss. The back
eclipses a white staircase.)**

from dead man to dismembered beast
the other story
round about this chair
there was a sentence
“I can’t see when that will start”

(A noise in memory. He imagines steps, slight touch. A sense beginning to take on body there in the stairwell. But she recovers cinders and songs.)

rocks and ruins
a clatter riles the local landscape
he cannot leave
bodies in shelters
plenty
the wall hardly visible
the fragile bones in the hand
jeté with a beat
between two descriptions
sleep and fable
you'll not figure out anything

the instant before sense
he unjoins his hands
employs them in the cipher
the spider hangs above the bed
oversteps color
so they go
hasty gestures in the course of the day
or the stealthy passage of beasts

*no other tongue
the cold as a telling*

until worn out
his childhood persists in gesture
at the center (a bandage)
nerves take the place of fire

mouth
struck by deflection

lower
where each noise is aware of its space
images can dismember
a table brings out dizziness
and the obscene

-translated from the French by Keith Waldrop



FANNY HOWE

SERVITUDE

The morning light
Begins in white
Till things
Fill up again
Wind color particles
The low and the muddy
Rejoice as shapes
Say *Ho*
And hens:
The egg is warm!

Pot holes and gravel, utility poles, a public lav
I bagged the seed and egg
And waited for the rest to show me what a maggot is
If I could talk about divinity to the boss
It would not be pretty
The mop hits the wall, wet, a hidden child
Unfolds one more step into
New England and nuclear plants
Places I know where
A god can giggle and shoot with a gun

Outside maples drip rainwater
Tucked in the dark night
Two boys in a tenement, a yellow dog
A brown leafy nest and a hollow pool
Uncushioned the mother sleeps on
Holding her head
Down to drown
Passive as a pauper, as a criminal
Willing to pay for her crime
For time is physical, not in the air

This was the life assigned to me
I don't know why
I was pushed into a seat
Beside books and brick yards
Mean adults stood all the way
My elbows had burns from leaning and beatings
Though trees were always new
The pleasure of watching doubled over me
As if to say, I pray
This has meaning. *Pray as in hope.*

Condemned to twenty seasons
Of whitefaced action
And piled onto a table to work
When my teeth fell out
I stuffed chalk under my gums
Drank sugar water through a nipple
Played among the babies of the middle class
Learned I was humble
Then pulled the plaster from my face
In sections which crumbled

There's no way for me on earth
To lock and free my soul
Or it would teach me how to die
And I don't want to
I who love a prison more than a master
Where water washes off my past
Leaving me naked as a bastard
I don't know why I like it so much
Here on a par with the rest
With all as involved with aliveness as us

Torn from the language of my childhood
When I was cut to size
And it was done, I leaned down
To where the clay turns soft
Like this I splurged on liturgy
It gave me a migraine to read the word GOD
In water lights, in everything good
Instead I saw stones
Happy *Oh*'s, the vowels and holes
Of planetary silence

A daring blue heron
Hops into place
And a cloud
Sends showers down
Some moves
Provoke endless patterns
Each thing is sewn into time, then
Agreeing to die
Is the most extreme caprice
Complex as lace

I can't die twice
In Nebuchadnezzar's dream
Of a universal history
The pendulum stopped
On the tonic of its scale
I was near despair
A mother of children
For what is given is only sufficient
To those who interpret the world
And still leave it there

Love's body and mouth lie down together
Its hidden parts soft inside
A right triangle
Its mouth is well made
Muscular and wide, I like
Its hands, long shadows in the joints
Both palms lined to show it's had some lives
All its hair prickles and shines
And its smile
Goes down. So does the sun

CLARK COOLIDGE

DIALOGUES

1.

But what could you make room for,
if you hadn't any? If you couldn't
see your way clear and had to stop and think.
There has to be a halt to these things,
you know, you just can't keep peering.

I haven't got the slightest.
I haven't got any further with it.

It's a matter of all the needs, you know,
all the needs you'd glean. There's pepper
in it when you get to the top of it.
There's a whole bowl of wheat rising on the flame.

Stop it.
Think it over.

If I stop I won't be able to think, and
there's no stop to thinking.

Skip it then.
Leave gaps.

That's it then. You're all a matter of pretensions.
When I came here I expected to find...
And now it's you here and what have I got?

Find your chair and have a sit.
Feel like what? Maybe have a spot.
There's the usual. And then there's the unsufferable.

Just between the two, you've invented
all this. Now that's a place for an argument.
A fine pedal between two chairs.

Get off.

A remark! Nice and fine and edgy and
parked as a fiver in your clothes.
We could start a fire and have us a hum.

A filled pipe and a number two washer.
Three windows in our home to be seen from.
I'd rather you hadn't a better head for that.
We're invisible in our dreams.

You've seen this then? You've filled out and
let it slide? I've a better notion of
nights than this slow marble.

Brass bands I'd pick instead of loose awnings.
The woman'll be up with the sun.

She'll start us off and then it'll be up to us
to part as equals.

You and me both.
Such like and what's owed.

Bring the intended and we'll hold the room.

Darned impossible. Wound bright.

2.

The only trouble with them is that when they come
they make you think that's all we get.

Price of a right thing.

Bend of an elbow.

The only trouble is that we're let off afterward.

Nice. Sorry.

But we don't diminish. Or if diminishing
slightly extend the while.

The whole?

A whole is white.

Quite wide.

Insolvent.

Dubiously, if at all.

We have run out.

The only trouble is that we are the grit
of the more and more.

Often.

3.

Silent winter. Noisy summer.
Birds in the hedges. Movement in windows.
Slow cough muffled. I turned to the server
and asked for a plate.

You were often off a scratch in those days.

I thought there would be a fullness, but the
ratchets prevented. A lie would be
adherent, or the cusp of a stall.

You mixed no dissemblance.

The honeys were all a comb of jelly, the only
movement an open grave. I was straight
with them all. I handled the buckles out in
the clear.

You make me hum.

There is a variability. There is the home
to return to. They take measures there.

Risky, the known. A pell-mell of nouns
on condition. You have to stand on
what you've saved.

I saw her standing there. I saw her bend.
She had stalled in the whiteness and gave a
glare all round as she kneeled. She
was fraught. She bit. Even after she
was left alone.

But you playéd with her. You told her.

I was at loose ends and she was taking the air.

Come to a decision.

Stop me.

Feel her ribs.

Same as my dreams.

4.

A bit is a piece of turntype, a swelling bolt.

You make of an easy stretch a compound.

But I have omitted the soup.

You had hoped to last out on a rock.

I was too forward. I should have
spent myself listening.

All outdoors. All to be roamed among.

There is the street drawn off to a white cap.

There is a single-bladed gate green with the rain.

My jacket lined with sedge.

Tobacco in my watchpocket.

We must be removed, we must silence the hall.

The course is arguable.

Blind or blond?

A couple, interminable.

5.

Empty room with a head in it, that's
my mind.

Caught?

Impenetrable with all. What's sealed is
what's shouldered. I could have come loose
once but I fit.

Not long?

Ever.

Then what do you see?

Little thing. Not much higher than a cork.
Lived once, then rode. Streams that carry
the free away to more hollow spheres.
Lit candles lacking shafts. Roar of air
beyond its notes. I see far, wide,
empty, small things.

Then do you care?

The situation of carpets. The lining of tacks.
The allotment of the dusts. Air compressed to
layer over the feet won't hard push down.
Appointments. Tangents. Edges.

Where is the farm?

Uxbridge.

The share?

Iron weights.

Permission?

Quartz.

6.

It's all over in a pinhole. Start in straight and carry away. All of a night, short end pencils and pumpkins leaking. They don't care, they have to stand. We'll give them room. We'll iron them to a shine thin worth. They'll have to settle up. We'll stand them over. Night aisles spinning in their proper blend.

A heat blade owl awning attic.

Child of the thought chilly.

Wonder garment, boiler vines.

It makes a hole in the window, you better crop your elbow. Talking to you, shelling at you.

Small round firm and spacious. Smell of an idea.

You're a holder.

I mean.

MICHAEL GIZZI

GYPTIAN IN HORTULUS

for Arlette Jabès

*impostumes, and chappes or ristes
of the fondement.* D. Rembert Dodoens

Take cover in the groove
George Clinton

the texts proclaim the gift of dura
Supreme Being and recovery of
the enrichment of his own con

Thus
the entire topography of the country is
male aspect as inseminator, but
wears a grid on his head
emblem of his province There
compared to the lightning
of the being enriched by its ex

preliminary ablutions of *ces dames*

slippers we put on made of palm fronds

obscene *objet trouvé*

gold piastres of her snood

fillet of light on me wanton's beam

beside the fire amidst caressing

great ropes hanging from on high

another mind pleasing the Eye

Egypt with its waters causing her to

her name there also a pear

coated with this light

ruby the Ancient names fit into
words in cadences of color
delphinium lotus mignonette. Nile tomb they form
In the bud
she returns
to the other some of us prefer
My thoughts then
expressed in: rose rent this was
grace the dove the vervain and the dog
flowers grasp
also the limpid
rose they stole the curves from
of Utopia as they watch

winged scarab which seems to sup
cypher of light and the following text

of the left Eye

in the myth by Tribulations

Or from a black pig
to the shine at the end of the day

divine harpooner who must
traverse all Egypt in his skiff

Of the world by means of Desire of his heart and the Word
speech his female counterpart

tray with erect phallus, arm holding flail
the styptic fire which concentrates

despatched his Eye. Again it was the lioness

thus

the oscillation of the plumb bob

leads to the profound

each ego another aspect of the myth

possible in the niches the sisters

& the 4 canopic vases

the Swan and the neighboring

ram-headed mummy between

in memory

of the first inhalation

equilibrium passing just in front of

Rise to great rejoicing

heard the voice in the garden walking

in the beginning

lust, the same buds with.

Flowers from an instinct

before language

bore leafy raiment , but

by accident describes the exquisite

The other the Egyptian

a caption The Compleat

a fruit we may proceed

to swap my arm for a branch

this much hunters sing

to court

exhibiting the remarkable

in the castle with the same

snow the name of this book

garden it for that

Light stands in the boat's cabin

femur in the astronomical ceiling

that is, during the descent

younger than it was the evening

registers astral in character

and who plays a role

which ceaselessly precipitate

substance

Book at the prow of the boat

text badly damaged

two eyes which are one

placed in the vertebral column. He

enters in its tail

See, here, the sublimation its image

of metabolism

the sun the lawns were studded with
the Continent, repaired
within reach the great enameler
erect, but like his heart
little things when he climbs
Now the fragrant Heliotrope
sun in a dancing
thro' heaven from the North
to us Yet we have much
murmuring, perhaps pure
to express ourselves a little palisade
your whitest for my worthy

turned inward

a language of tones

or soul

to quote one witness

in the tone

music forsakes. Sense

but to the mode

essentially moved emotion

precisely this

stirs us deeply

Time because objective

presupposes it, pure inwardness

all utterance and a nothing

(something unsayable could it be said)

inwardness

the nothing of which mood

one has a world, therefore

tones

ROSMARIE WALDROP

FROM *INSERTING THE MIRROR*

27

The labyrinth of language. You know your way as you go in one bony side, but out the other you're lost in spiral frequencies, unsettled air as coiled as who'll believe it. Not for the first time has a wave broken on a hammer, anvil, or suddenly, which is a deep space where sentences breathe differently and the rider rocks in the stirrup. Caress of hair like dark approaching a naked voice. Or scales. If the air won't take my word I can't trace half a circle, falling, dizzy, into the confusion of canals.

28

If I promise day after day: tomorrow I'll come to see you, am I saying the same thing every day, or does a rainbow grow frenetic in the to and fro between eye and image, bits of light torn from a mirage which doesn't appease desire, but only fits into its own shape? Incestuous words, reflecting reference as mere decor or possibly a blanket. Orphaned so severely, the eye still trusts that emptiness is ready to receive the rain.

29

Once the word ‘pain’ has replaced crying, behavior functions as landscape, and the philosopher can treat a question like an illness. The decisive moment is now, but dust has no particular object as it rises to the occasion, and only when I blink can I still see the distant shore. Nothing had prepared me for the end of monotony. I’ve always admired thin lines like the string of the marionette, which replaces consciousness catching in the hollow of the knee. But alone on a page. Or crossed out.

30

Look at that blue, you said, detaching the color from the sky as if it were a membrane. A mutilation you constantly sharpen your language for. I had wanted to begin slowly because, whether in the direction of silence or things have a way of happening, you must not watch as the devil picks your shadow off the ground. Nor the scarlines on your body. Raw sky. If everybody said, I know what pain is, could we not set clocks by the violent weather sweeping down from the North? Lesions of language. The strained conditions of colored ink. Or perhaps it is a misunderstanding to peel back skin in order to bare the mechanics of the mirage.

EDMOND JABÈS

FROM *THE BOOK OF DIALOGUES*

NOTEBOOK, II

To talk alone, at the threshold, with already-gone, has-been, to-be-announced. To be your own legend.

Close in on the real: vocation of vocables.

"We share the same language. You only use it to state who you are, I, to find out who I am. We are both wrong. Perhaps this is why we are drawn to each other," he wrote.

"My mother tongue is foreign. Hence I am on easy terms with my strangeness," he said.

And added: "I have patiently forged my language out of words which were foreigners, making them into brothers."

And had he not written earlier: "I did not take your soul: I gave it to you?"

What is a foreigner?—One who makes you think you are at home.

*(Creation is play of light and dark, of war zone and zone of peace.
But who will define them?*

Cries and laughter—ah, all my books blur into the word "write."

To take the contradictions into our keeping.

At the edge of Emptiness.)

RECOVERED PAGES

Words do not run to silence, but to an initial readiness of the word, the basis of dialogue.

The Jew is in dialogue as one prepares to listen: always just on the point of.

Going to the sources means, for the Jew, to blaze the trail of his becoming by carving a path back into the past.

"We drink from two wells: one and the same," he had noted.

Only the book vouches for God's absence.

Transparency comes clear only to the transparent.

You test the silence while it writes with your own hand.
What a fine ear it takes to hear it inside the words!

He said: "God did not create the universe, but conceived space. O wondrous readiness of the void."

And added: "Ideas are smothered because man is smothered in his body. Both lack the space needed for their full flowering."

"Thought is of divine essence. Hence its misery."

"Judaism warrants that the written belongs to the unwritten as well as the unwritten to the written, because Utterance means book to the Jew, and book, an ever resumed reading of his fate," he also said.

Undated

"The Jew's future runs many a risk of disappearing. This threat of death is its mute ferment," he had written.

Passage from specific to non-specific, from the grain of sand to the desert.

This exaggerated dimension, out of proportion to the object it refers to, is nevertheless not excess, but a pledge of plenitude, condition of its need.

"Limits are locks," he said. "The unlimited is the key."

Passage from self to infinite where the self dissolves.

Thus the Jew tackles the difficult Jewish reality, having turned the word "Jew" into another word: word of not-belonging beyond all belonging, affirming and, at the same time, subtly denying the latter.

"The unpronounceable Name," he noted, "will have been pronounced at least once: in fire, by our names turned ash."

Undated

He wrote: "What does God's *I am that I am* mean, unless: I am Light for some, Dark for others, and for all, the Unknown?"

To encircle the day. Even the circle is still light.

"The dark cannot challenge the light: it is its night," he said.

"Who thinks when we think?" he asked. "We are so surrounded by thoughts that a sage once said we are all thought-robbers.

"I have the feeling that, in thinking, we project outward a throng of thoughts all contained in the thought we are rushing toward like children chasing a marvelous butterfly."

"So light, so light our Law. Never has it been a burden for thought to maintain it in its eminence, high above our foreheads," he said.

"We cannot think of death without thinking of ourselves as mortal.

"This is why death will never preoccupy God," he also said.

"Unawares God was born and unawares He died.

"Perhaps He owes His immortality to this blank, just as we owe being mortal to knowing His ignorance," wrote a sage who had come by the main gate into the madness of wisdom.

"Poor man," his disciples said of him. "The boat carries him off, and he can no longer tell prow from poop."

"Ah my God, why must all that to You is simplicity itself hold unfathomable complexities for us?" he had cried out.

Had he forgotten that he himself was the author of these lines: "God said to His creature: *I am He who made dark into light, and human complexity into divine simplicity. Still, light is a mystery to Me, simplicity a dead-end?*"

Undated

I am stopped by this sentence in his notebook: *"And God said: Only Moses is like Me. I have wanted him, like Me, absent: absent from the Book and the splendor of My Word, absent from the land to whose threshold he, through My will, led My people.*

"Therefore, of all My creatures, he is closest to Me. And suffers most, for the absence I have agreed to share with him is My infinite pain."

Moses' absence is the truth of the Law.
On this absence, God is written.

And the disciples flocked around their Master and asked:
"We are—you showed us the words—descendants of Abraham.

"We are—you showed us the words—descendants of Isaac.

"We are—you showed us the words—descendants of Jacob.

"Are we not also descendants of Moses?"

"Who can claim to be the child of a word?" replied the Master.

"To use the language of earth to talk with the sky, and the language of the sky to talk with the earth—who, after God, could do this?"

"The blood of the covenant was but the black ink of visibility," he had noted.

Undated

“*Where are you?*” To this question of God’s, man answered: *Hidden*. Did he mean to say: *I have hidden my name*, suspecting that it was by his name that God called him?

“*I have, like You, hidden my name, but shall always be visible to You.*” This is how I interpret Adam’s reply, because what he does not admit boils down to:

“*Twice I tried to get free of Your face, first, by hiding from Your eyes, then, when I could not flee, by avoiding my own.*”

“We are permutations of God,” he said, “just as colors, varying temperatures and reflections are metamorphoses of Time ceasing to write itself in order to be written by our senses.

“Writing will have brought heat and cool, kindled and bruised our eyes, multiplied our reflections tenfold, masked and undressed us without scruples.”

But is the written not also changed once it no longer writes, but is forever rewritten?

“Separated all through life, the *I* and the *You*—O fulness—celebrate their union in death,” he said.

The mind stumbles at the unheard-of: crystal, crystal.

“*Where are you?*” To this question of man’s, God replies: “Where air is Null and the Void airy.

“On this pure air you live. You die of its impurities.”

Undated

And God said to Cain: "What have you done?" thinking: "What have you done to your name all spattered with the blood of your brother's name joined to Mine?"

Cain befouled the inviolable Name of the Lord in befouling his own. His descendants must drag to the end of time the remorse for this act.

On this remorse, we write.

(Writing becomes violence in trying to come to terms with the void. Hence its despair.

Cain's answer: "Am I my brother's keeper?" could be translated: "Am I my brother's words? Do I not also have a right to express myself?"

To espouse another's words means to some extent renouncing your own.

Violence for violence.

The word generates conflict. It is the aggressive expression of our finite nature.)

"A lover can never anticipate how his beloved will take his words of love which she inspired."

He added: "Of all the words we beg for, ah, which will for once fill our cup?"

God is beyond love.

He is its yonder.

Absence: aubade of senses.

"The reality of light is the dark," he said. "And we don't even notice."

Undated

"The law comes before us," said a sage, "but it also leaves us behind. For if our past is in all the words of the law—and sometimes in its silence—our future depends on reviving them with tears of pain or joy, as you would animals or plants with water."

And he added: "I have often wondered why the Law of Moses could only be read in joy or pain. My answer is: because we are its potion, just as it is our double horizon."

Invisible, the Law in our commentaries. It is the staunch space between one word and another. Now behind, now in front.

"My Law is my wealth and is the Book. My book is my poverty and is my law," he had written.

My hand—its spirit—rules the book, and my law—its writ—my hand.

(*"What is the law?"*
"Opening the dialogue."
"What is dialogue?"
"Opening the law.")

Insolent word facing insolent silence.
God has more than once felt fear of God.

“Bee and ewe,” he said, “make the fortune of the Law. One gives us honey, the other, milk.”

Later

“Are you there, answer me, are you there? How else could I be sure of my existence?”

“God,” he wrote, “will never know who He is, being so deeply Himself in the incommensurable absence of Self.”

translated from the French by Rosmarie Waldrop

JOHN YAU

RED FOUNTAIN
RECOIL
VIEW

RED FOUNTAIN

When the last mirage evaporates
I will be the sole proprietor of this voice
and all its rusted machinery.
At dawn, pine green quilted clouds
glide down the mountain, dead and dying birds
stuck to their flypaper underbellies.
I have reread the instructions.
I have hidden the limelight vapors
and flowers of memory, their pulse
of sapphire tears. By tomorrow
or the day after, I will have collected
enough gasoline and lightning.
Do you remember the lipstick imprint?
Is it true he has my name
stamped on his identity card?
The leaves are whiter this year
and another boat has capsized on the lake.
Did I tell you I delivered the letter?
Your eyes are green sometimes blue or brown.
I have mowed the lawn and fed the chickens.
The wind is spinning, but air has settled into the locks.

RECOIL

Clouds drape moon in striped appeals
We erase the words surrounding us

and kiss under the concrete bridge connecting
last year's popular versions of heaven and hell

Our heads are billboards posted above desire
In each insect welded tunnel

someone enters a chamber of delirium

VIEW

A small package of rusty weather
falls off the mountain in an ostrich
oboe dress, its blue occasion.

PAUL METCALF

BLENNERHASSETT

1767, one Harman Blennerhassett was born in England. He claimed to be Irish, of "noble descent," and a biographer "describes his parentage as among the most distinguished of the *gentry* of Ireland, who could trace their lineage as far back as the English King John."

1797, wealthy and married, he went to Europe, supplied himself with a library, then shipped to New York, journeyed overland to Pittsburgh, barged down the Ohio to Parkersburg, where he bought an island in the river—Blennerhassett Island. Here on this "gem of nature" in the midst of the wilderness—an island that had once been coveted by George Washington—he bought slaves and hired hands to clear the land and began construction of his mansion—a creation on which he eventually expended the outlandish sum of sixty thousand dollars.

The mansion's appearance, to a boatman floating down the river, generated emotions "not unlike those experienced in gazing on the Moorish palaces of Andalusia." "The ground rose gradually on all sides to its centre, and on this favorable spot was the house, erected in the style and splendor of a Parisian pavilion. It was but sixty feet square, consisting of two stories, connected with wings by a semi-circular veranda, luxuriantly covered with myrtle, and commanded an extensive range of one of the loveliest regions in the world. . . . Everywhere were contrasts and surprises, evidencing an eye that had surveyed the best effects of Europe; and, to crown the whole, walks, lawns, and shrubberies were blooming with all the flowers and fruits, and vocal with all the melody a generous clime so literally dispenses to this Italy of the West. The effect of this contrast between the perfection of wild and cultivated loveliness, of this discovery of the triumph of Art in the very stronghold of Nature, was perfectly entrancing." "On a nearer approach was observed the beautifully graded lawn, decked with tasteful shrubbery, and interspersed with showy flowers; while, a little in the distance, the elm threw its dark branches over a carpet of most beautiful green sward. Beyond these,

the forest trees were intermingled with copsewood, so closely as to exclude the noon-day sun; and, in other places, they formed those long sweeping vistas, in the intricacies of which the eye delights to lose itself; while the imagination conceives them as the paths of wilder scenes of sylvan solitude. The space immediately in the rear of the dwelling was assigned to fruits and flowers; of which the varieties were rare, excellent and beautiful; and the manner in which they were disposed over the surface, unique, elegant and tasteful. Espaliers of peach, apricot, quince and pear trees, extended along the exterior, confined to a picket fence; while, in the middle space, wound labyrinthine walks, skirted with flowering shrubs, and the eglantine and honey-suckle flung their melliferous blossoms over bowers of various forms.” “...huge sycamores and other kingly forest trees guarded and graced the head of the isle, and the wild-grape, trumpet-vine and creepers, thick and matted, interlaced the shores and touched the willows that encircled the wilderness on every side.” “Greeting the eyes in front of this mansion... a graded lawn of several acres adorned with walks and dotted here and there with shrubbery and clusters of bright flowers and extending eastward to the rippling water’s edge of the upper end of the island, with an opening in the reserved trees.”

“The hall was a spacious room, its walls painted a sombre colour, with a beautiful cornice of plaster, bordered with gilded molding, running round the lofty ceiling; while its furniture was rich, heavy and grand. The furniture in the drawing-room was, in strong contrast with that of the hall, light, airy and elegant; with splendid mirrors, gay-coloured carpets, classic pictures, rich curtains, and ornaments to correspond, arranged, by Mrs. Blennerhassett, with nicest taste and harmonious effect. A large quantity of silver-plate ornamented the sideboards and decorated the tables. The whole establishment was chastened by the purest taste, and without that glare of tinsel finery, too common among the wealthy.”

"Blennerhassett spent much time in his library reading, conducting 'philosophical experiments,' playing the violin and cello. He was reputedly able to repeat the whole of Homer's Iliad in the original Greek. Tall and stooping, and aristocratically near-sighted, he liked to hunt, but he was a poor shot; due to his eyesight. He was terrified of earthquakes and thunderstorms. He would go to bed if an electrical storm passed over."

"Lady Margaret...could read and fluently converse in Italian and French, and was endowed in mind and manner and educated to grace with ease any position in the courts of Europe. In figure she was tall and well proportioned...In dress her taste inclined to the showy and attractive, and she aimed to select and adapt her outfit to her well-shaped form...In the saddle she was an expert equestrienne...Often, her cloth, scarlet riding robe, spangled with gold lace and glittering buttons and her flowing tresses waving beneath her ostrich-plumed hat, glimmered in the vine and leaf-tangled woods, as she freely rode along the river paths...It is said that a farmer's son rented and cultivated a field of corn on the island, near the avenue leading from house to river, for the sole purpose of stealing a look at her beautiful person..."

"This estate upon a lovely island...was indeed a rich dominion for the cultivated mind, a picture of peace, repose, quietude, innocence and happiness."

*

*

*

July 12, 1804, Aaron Burr mortally wounded Alexander Hamilton in a duel at Weehawken, New Jersey. Some months later—finding it convenient to be at some remove from Weehawken—Burr shipped down the Ohio, and called upon the Blennerhassetts.

"At that time Mexico was trying to throw off the yoke of Spanish rule, and a war was also imminent between Spain and the United States; and Burr . . . conceived the idea of organizing and assembling a large force of armed men for the purpose of colonizing that region, with the ultimate object of conquering Mexico and establishing himself king or emperor, and then annexing to that usurped country all of the territory west of the Alleghenies! . . . After having accomplished this much, it was then his purpose to march upon the capitol of the United States, into the halls of Congress, overthrow the American republic over which he had recently served as vice president, and install himself as the central head of a great empire, extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains, and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf. But in order to carry out his designs, it was necessary to secure financial assistance. He knew that Blennerhassett was a person of considerable means, and decided to visit him."

Aaron Burr—the confidence man. And cultivated, stooping, near-sighted Harman Blennerhassett—the perfect mark.

"With a small fleet of river boats and a company of young adventurers from the vicinity Blennerhassett started down the Ohio River under cover of darkness December 10, 1806, planning to meet Burr at Natchez. Rumors of a treason plot had already spread over Virginia and had reached President Jefferson at Washington, and the next morning a body of Virginia militia came to the island to arrest the two conspirators. Both had gone but the mansion and the island were confiscated and many of the beautiful furnishings were damaged or destroyed. Mrs. Blennerhassett and the children fled."

Burr and Blennerhassett were arrested and tried for treason. Both were acquitted, but Blennerhassett was ruined. The estate was seized by creditors, the tailored grounds given over to slovenly farming... and, in 1811, the mansion burned.

Harman and Lady Margaret wandered, tried their hands at this and that. Both died in penury.

ANNE - MARIE ALBIACH

FROM *MEZZA VOCE*

“WINTER VOYAGE”

a precision

reiterated in the disproportion of a knowledge
THE OPENING

accentuates the detours
“pierced and motionless Bodies”:

the Difference

institutes a recurrence: abstracted
*the involute
pathway
a line
without detour*

Abusive

for a distortion that gives no respite: *the voice just this side of
theme
a moment*

brought back into play: the look accentuates such deviation in Difference: a clearing given over to *free reins*

DETERMINATION: an Other defines the body's limits

in the projected act playing on stage
impotence *and its lyricisms* CHAINS

THE PATHWAY REMAINS NO LESS
omniscient

in the mirrored play of
fallen
perspectives

involution of discourse
THE IMAGE

in light and during nighttime

distance

WHITENESS
DISPARITY: A BLOSSOMING

IN THE MARGINS

impatience: *a sterility*
brought under accusation:
an echo:
in chasms: diverse liquids:
colorless numbers of
speech:

one comes back to the elaboration of breath: *impossible*
otherside

returning at sharp angles (in *sweetness*)

impalpable: a passing, a presence

REPOSITIONING of Desires

in language

DIVERGENCE

from want of and their detours
CONVENIENCES

“the arrest”

attentive to the silence
she leans
overcome by a return or
minute elaboration
multiplication
of vulnerable points

PRETENCE

A WORD PERSISTS: just this side of

WHITE

gestures attenuate the pathway of absence

elaboration of a GAME
in the background
irrepressible

“modulations”

departure after representation

:dismemberment

the notion of “default” intervenes
in the statement: COUNTERPOINT

They transgress her fragility naming it

that which is silenced in weakness,
in the very otherness
ignoring such breath.

“sleep”

in which scenes THE ABSENCE are played

in the retreat of speech
Several VOICES

of the object:

musique prohibits the sum

breathing: lips the only fragmentation

“but speech”
if you encounter him : his trail is before them

passing through **preparing for elaborations**

DENIAL.

alternative the image turns the last image
defaults (as at an ANGLE)

“a divergent response”
this
swirling
“bated breath in the calligraphy” given notice
original deeds

: coldness this
Embrace

Second part: he has given his suspended breath
The alchemical composition of bodies will
transmit this *IMAGE* Their departure
delivers us to the multitude of open bodies

EYES

“song”

translated from the French by Joseph Simas



GEOFFREY YOUNG

FROM ROCKS AND DEALS

*"as long as this wet
pitch contorts."*

13

If all good things come by grace, and grace comes
By art, and art does not come easy, then this
Sentence is a re-write. Laughter in the quark's not
The scale of it. I might as well hang
This dream for maple drip, or walk on fallen apples
To moo the wash dry. A man in himself is
An intersection, a sequel, a shopping mall polaroid
Chromatic midget blunder charisma fantasy.
The rippling body primarily a surface to be written
And kissed. Peripety means a sudden change
Of direction in a literary work. Here, take this
Inter-species pill. Let life be anything
And everything it is, Agnes, because language is
Just one of the tastes in your mouth. And your
Photos prove you were there, tricksy spirit. I don't know
How a second violinist in a big orchestra can
Stand it! Out of twelve ways a certain tone can move,
Only one way in a particular situation is the
Right, enduring way. I don't want to die until
I feel better, he said, but that was a flu ago.
Art is life made to order. What better way to spend
The electronic age? Even a simple-minded
Example of what missing plutonium signifies should
Keep us on intimate terms. And all these chickens
In the barn what barn whose barn my barn! The product
Is filial hush, all of our children are loves.
Even the vermiculated clarities of Jean Arp achieve

Their plot as sand traps. And the cheese stands
Alone, de furiens natura bona fecit. So what is it
About high tide at dusk brings the succulent
Seafaring creatures to the edge of the foam?
Why some nights the mood's so cold the kitchen
Sponge shivers? When I celebrate a sleazy milieu,
I aim for friendly solidarity. To be up against
Dishonest elected officials and skillful public relations . . .
My boss is trying to use me to plug holes
He dug long before I came along. I'm walking, this is
Fats Domino talking. The first vision is of
The immensity of space. The second is, *c'est moi*, having
The vision. I really "teen out" for it.
It's just too rich to subdivide. And in the tumult
That followed the explosion, she knew the place
For the ideal second house, but could she figure out
How to have a first somewhere? But this is
14th century wit. We were barely genes then.

A man in bed dying of cancer rings for another pill.
With affection he calls it Leviathan, because
Of its minute size. Body under light summer blanket,
Are you breathing? Then we left the pellet
Dreams of far-off pecking crows to other chroniclers
Of California glottal shock. Concrete in detail,

Abstract as a whole, like pollen, power outage, our father
Who art in *Hamlet*. Take nothing but pictures,
Leave nothing but footprints. "I'm sorry I was so
Bitchy this morning." Now we *are* the poker chips,
The ice not due back for another 90,000 years. When
Your imagination is working, where is Greece,
Where Rome, where *The Mermaid*, where's home? It was
A body of water vapor he didn't recognize.
And comes a time when waiting for it to burn off is a joke.
So the roster fills with compelling new poets
For whom the republic of letters is still in the future,
A raw future not yet sung, nor humanized. Then
Liberty leads the people past K-Mart to the Toyota showroom
Floor. A bank of hardware store TVs like a moment's blithe talk . . .
After all, it's a bald, hairy, deboned chicken
Fights for the comb market, the cola gap label look.
Starlings too numerous to groom, rise and drop in waves
Across a field strewn with muck, the afternoon
Tapped in on portable, icicles listing towards
The sun. Announcers conjure the notion of listeners,
They act as though these phantoms were physically
Present to be addressed through gaze, body orientation,
Voice calibrated for distance. They offer birdseed to the birdie.
Meanwhile the starlings stigmatize possession.
"Make nothing, mar nothing," they brag to the elm.
Curious the way concentration isn't concentrated
"In" anything, rather the urge to let aperture appertain.
What information would you torture for?
Maybe I was that lesbian's pet sparrow, a lotta tragedy
It didn't do me. Catch small now in dream vase,
Finesse so ardently acquired from the masters.

The “combat” picture is clearly pornographic.
It arouses elected officials to stunt their growth, and
 Notice the brand. But don’t let us bother about
The background: make a few rapid studies on the spot.
 It’s half price night on day-time amour. It’s quiz,
It’s game, it’s soap, it’s talk, it’s vice. It’s getting
 Personal again, they’re bolting down the seats.
Poem at the instrument panel, spatter of pre-dawn
 Pheasant squawk. An art is perfected only
When it ceases to be art. Like back when 100% cotton
 Was king? No one is immune to quilts, ’less
They pull one up over your eyes. Now the monks are listening
 To the sound of water boiling in the kettle.

15

A slip of the pen and the cat is tonguing her fur.
 Tiny raindrops pock the pond. Ayler rewinds
West Side Story for a little more song and dance.
 These things too... Ultimate February has no
Other home but this phrase out of context. Nothing
 Resembles another thing so much as it does itself.
Genes play roulette, syllables govern the world.
 There’s no way to justify the ways of man to man.
In all the history of Christendom people have hated
 Without reason, and loved inexplicably.

For myself, I regard everything that has ever been said

As total nonsense. Wherever you go, you meet
Part of your story. I say this to myself then quickly

Type it in. Hummingbird at Frieda Kahlo's
Thorn-scratched neck says one thing and means it.

Once on a high and windy pun, distance drops
Out of the heavens to Betsy who promptly narrates:

"There are rules against seeing the rules."
"It is a fraud to conceal a fraud." "Families breed us,

Name us, teach us, embarrass us, annoy us,
Drive us away, and then lure us back." "It's only pain.

It doesn't hurt much." So here we stand, alone,
In pairs, alone. Make no mistake: to write is to scribble.

"A chalk white trail slips down through chaparral,
Disappears in a thicket covering the arroyo" begins

One particular bedtime story setting, far, far
From those canyon footprints this dirt road Neo England

Night night kiss. Erupts a stockboy stamping
Prices on the goods. A push-button DeSoto. Stale air

Of flea-bag lobby black & white TV night.
Let us pause a moment to prod memory with the long

Bamboo poles we Arthurian boys jostled with
As horseless through tall valley grass we ran at

Each other. Brutal class and ethnic divisions,
Illiteracy, poverty, disease, get the fuck out of here.

Any catcher's job is to find the pitcher's
Best pitch *that* night. Thus does the work contain.

I keep seeing a pink pig leaping over a bog,
Snarled at by vicious white dogs. And I love symbolism.

Money isn't the star of art, the identity habit's
The capital of self. But the interest lies in making it

Any way you want. Watchmen of the private sea...
If I honor my offspring may I be left on my own
To dredge, drain and reclaim spontaneity? Acoustics
Like these call forth eerie trompe l'oeil sounds, like
"Your low frequency woofer's on a high frequency
Tweeter jag." Or, pointing to the snow-covered yard
The four year old says, "Somebody spilled a lot
Of milk." Immediate experience will not leave us
Alone to cohere around a teacup. And why should it?
Set El Greco's wax people near the fire and you lengthen
What is already too long. We are coated with a layer
Of extremely fine magnetic particles, but for the
Electric body to sing, it must be played by hand.



BRUCE ANDREWS

FROM *I DON'T HAVE ANY PAPER, SO SHUT UP*

STALIN'S GENIUS

Stalin's genius consisted of not french-kissing: sometimes I want to be in crud. Your spats of visibility—o, crow fluke, genetically organized spuds, what can true work? Birth is skewed, anon., *capital; lose* that disembowelment; you must change it by eating it yourself: don't pick your noses, secrecy thrives on abuse. No, I don't mean the missile crisis, cat goes backward to suit international organization: middle class families want the belly choose
to obey authority—waddle into arson anything can be converted, the accessories get you wet.

Most of life is just pre-school anyway; paste lives like that, money should be detached from the ego—creme, no sugar, no urine, like the junior mints of a previous century; I'm nothing more than a noise gate. Eat the demographics

into it is not enough, you didn't do it but you did it instead
I cheese my drawers, his creature comforts were redistributed. Business press is redundant—joint diseases fork up the land
gas administered keg

harp

keg

harp

make someone else's mother redundant, reductive, seminal perfecta: psychic powers look for work. Woman's place = sexual deviance, doesn't it have pockets?

Grow down instead, let's go somewhere fancy & be rich pigs. Beirut hurt in U.S. marine's body, we have breast conferences returning from the candy wars, wholesale corazon—we've made a culture that kills music wants a limousine with an Arab driver: to be accepted, use

motherfucker in every sentence; in America country means white.
Poignant plastic punters want all
get none
every alternative induces guilt, elevators will burn you; whose fruit do
you want to melt? Reduce the rare, had to fight to scratch. We only
drop the a-bomb on you if you're intransigent. Go eat your own root!

Asset is putrid

harmony hotwire, an intellectual slug Vegas color red... and chicken
electricians coughed that operate... derelictions of thumb... gee, I
thought fault, CIA Julie Andrews push-ups. DO MORE
Cardiopuscular elective compulsion, great fins. Like a priest boning
up for mass with rheinmaidens only tolerate prosecutorial information,
it's like saving string. Not that I know how to pray—trade the mis-
understanding for eggs—& whip the muthafucka. Thinking is a nice
guy not a growth industry, totalitarian means they have a higher literacy
rate. If you don't take my advice, I feel manipulated.

Show us whites walk: confirmed hard-shell on her wedding day,
mindless violence is always the handiwork of my teenaged son, auxiliary
police in your mouth. Meaningful body movement usually indicates a
sick economy, quislings can just go annex *themselves*. Arrogance
ceased living—my beaver's now popping its tail. The nurse wiped the
drool from the alibi; too much flesh does not make sense. The lure of
awkward money, terrorists good-humoredly
experience is redesigned as complicity. I like publicity, backside hides
worse crimes—I think of documentation as domination, can't deal with
people who are precious & dead. Pepsi sleep while you weep I dyke my
Stuckey's, attach servant to pegboard. Contrabandistas Tequilero
skins and sticks perambulator.

Realistic flesh tones for a privileged *in vitro* few bluster douses crazy
kooks twit the parrot:

Biko

Biko

Biko

German expressionism lives in your wallet; clog my courts sent a signal
to my little brain, this uniqueness old hat. Every morning I practice
defending the canal zone

adjudicate your own spermatazoa. Fallout teaches us money burns,
all I can say is: Jessica Christ!—garbage in, garbage out, rest assured;
fluid can be a deterrent. Little more than words; self makes meaning
—fatter than margarine, I gave you an F—violations appear to invert
the power of the king; examples are there to deter—
nationalism just means delegate somebody else's self-importance.

SPECIES MEANS GUILT

Species means guilt. Slave ship somatism grease their wings wrencher
little pat miss dominatrix papal bull

is particularly unseemly for the FBI, negligibly robust video druids.
That's the thing about your poems, nothing but sex—sex sex sex reach
for wall same vista ugh trash lockout cloning derby. My structuralist
easter egg, prostrate angels—machines owl.

Stalin invented crisco. Argue better

chocolate makes us urban, spins of the spine—Arsenio, Chappotin,
truck rumbles into danger meister bed: are 'make it new' & 'make it

even' compatible? If you can't get a stiff, get a foreign leader. Laser bugs, get it?

Endurance of eggs, so, whose leisure time isn't depoliticized enough? Let's rerecap. Make your first orgasm a demo tape. Well, don't malice shown; only the bold choose liver, ass what gender—can you pee while you're laughing? Helmets always fascism; classical means what, fake sense of order?—give up the ghost as a rental property, blood gravy monarch: ballast not strong suit. Or: who cares?

Marathon your mother; invalid baton. Pinochet fumbles on the sidelines, a voluntary hormone—farce width, brittle thrusts, impatience is not an achievement hell was less philosophical smiling kotex reconstruction; Flintstone burn-outs. Tintype into the commodity form plans zigzag into blessings, meat cleaners in a house of ho. Lipread chevrons sheen-deep & unable to press the shift-key; I've got a little mood on. You call off your dogs & we'll call off our talk bleach popular leak, to transform counterfeit objects into things. Do I have to be an adult in this garbage? Listen, the pink stains are heroic; arrogant obedient remained as pure as Virginia ham clubbing and punching the marchers.

Suds down the dick in the outfield—to get to the top, step on yourself. They blindfold you & toys come out: unquote worming comma incest dunce, my coherence chained to the grass: Cuba will annex us—seminal chow, our body socket twists valve doth plead euthanasia mishaps. Diderot with a hard-on buck crunch—no human has a history. Nobody accepts your excuses. Eureka, the bond-holders—prefabricated

the decision to vacate the intestines, o islam semen trumps witch, gravity
let them eat stock
face the squeegee modestly: midgets torch the lavatory. I haven't
got anything specifically against Jung, stretch marks on authenticity
below which is. Me worry!

I was castrated for seducing the local tax collector's wife, including
the First Crusade, girls' tailored kitchens vend our trash spoon accul-
turation, this clot goes crabwise. Don't eat your friends, dollies regret
to creek; men were the first typewriters—apoplectic chickens . . .
let's fuck, or let's fuck with it

cipher banks on truth slump worse shit waterproofed horn guys
notice girls' goons ply the spit your lather litter funk. We face each
other across the ballistic trajectory of the Arctic waste. Tripodless zoo
directors who look'd as if they'd walked out of an . . .

Abuse's budy.

Banality jolts

duty rinse; pink brink can't beat much by that, fence walking with Mary
Magdalene—happy new yield! This is disingenuous twaddle. As
raw as bazooka invade the cake imagination feasts on spam.

I made an offering to the king's dead cod-piece, tunnel dogs choke;
heckling makes us prone to Republican . . . waste that self
defense budget drag queens, nice slow ham vacancy attracts a fuse. Blue
sprint humid as the lips are prone to nonsequitars, whiskey fits the
snorkel

low motion phonemes store our millenium adrenalin gaseous gravity
zero sum pop tarts

. . . delicate apartheid happenstance glee to pee force syrian weapons we
need: men are capital, women are the baby labor factory? Squirrels
are happy without our help.

MICHAEL PALMER

FROM C

Paper universe of primes
Flooded land flooded hand

House: herself in the mirror photographing herself

lies over then under

reticular figures

both speaking /

not speaking

There mute flooded paper curiously

'dust and moths'

house and loss

images I carry
down into this

'Now you cannot speak
and now...'

Unutterable
pages
of counterlight
in the fluid window
a dog sings songs
asking nothing
we cannot speak

stages
of what was not
the speaking says
in day's word for night
'mute as stalks'
('moths')
are figured there

EMMANUEL HOCQUARD

OF FOLIAGE, GRAMMAR, A LOVE

After his second shipwreck, Pollard never again went to sea. *He cried: I've had it! No shipmaster will ever entrust a whaler to me again!* "Finished his days as a nightwatchman in the town of Nantucket, guarding the houses and the people against darkness."

Image of night: peonies whiten in the light of lamps. Clear notes in the darkness of an interior shipwreck. *No shipmaster will ever entrust a whaler to me again!* Daily violence and grammatical movement: water boiling, foliage stirring in the cracked head of a nightwatchman.

Grammar: *in a frenzy they squeeze the body of their love, they mix their saliva with hers, they breathe in her breath, sharp teeth against her mouth.*

If wind and foliage met, the leaves would absorb the wind. Or the wind the leaves. *Vain effort since they can take nothing of the body they kiss, nor can they enter it, melting with it entirely.*

If wind and foliage met, everything would stop. Forever. Everything would dissolve, then, *in a tonic of darkness and the total absence of movement.*

Movement: neither consolation nor rest. From this semblance of a meeting is born a visible disturbance. The image of leaves in the wind, or a speaker in conflict with words. Swirls.

Swirls: a love is born this way. A love or a grammar. Without consolation, without rest, *since no part of a beautiful face can be ours to love, except these mockeries, these impalpable mockeries that the wind shows us, then carries away.*

Grammar or a love: words which quiver at the lips' opening, swirling foliage in the air.

Hiatus: foliage entered by the wind, gives its form to the wind, the form of foliage. Opening, hiatus. Wind and foliage, one single movement. Because foliage is without insides. Unless the wind is its inside.

Leaves: the open. The wind neither enters nor opens the leaves. Wind is the open of leaves.

Violence of blood running down the veins, of water boiling in the pot, of waves on the sea, of leaves in the wind.

Foliage, grammar, a love: movement which tends toward rest, toward silence, toward surfeit. Vain aspiration, but *love always hopes that the object which sparks this ardent flame is at the same time able to extinguish it.*

Daily violence. Non anecdotal, non individual. Constant, no matter which form it takes: foliage, grammar, a love.

And which intensity it wears. Because the softest caresses, the sweetest murmurs come from the same violence as the most furious, most tumultuous assaults. Violence more or less stifled according to the dimensions of the hiatus. The separation of edges: a strait, a mimosa.

All language culled in the twofold *je t'aime*. Each opening to the other. All grammar brought back to: *t'*.

t':...they breathe in her breath, sharp teeth against her mouth.
But one always speaks breathing out.

t': hiatus, interior limit of that which is neither inside nor finite:
foliage. The language culled, in its entirety, against the teeth at the lips'
opening. In exhaling.

Then, an explosion of a sail in the wind. A rip in the night. The
open. Foliage. A language. A love. *t'*.

translated from the French by Connell McGrath

RAY RAGOSTA

FROM *THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE*

10.

The pencil of sweet light
priest at the subliminal door,

around which vegetation grows
like utterance
from a dark cloud.

Angel caught in the winepress
allows the process
to continue undisturbed,
but produces such fine liquor,

causing the emotional center
to shift continually
as it re-traces words,

bee-brained elixir
in mead.

11.

The mind in rapt condition
lusts contrary to fact,

depicts the coprophagus beetle
(form of Khepera)
pushing the Sun-Disk west.

“I shall germinate,”
says the god,

and young beetles
emerge from
spheres of dung,

interpreted as inert matter
passing into life,

transferred to scarab amulets
planted in graves,

through pestilent overreaching.

The empirical worm grows
thick at the core of delight.

“I shall not turn into worms,”
Khepera protests,
as in beetle-form he slips
onto his back, legs lashing
in a futile attempt
to right himself.

Half the world is plunged
into darkness,
and the rest goes glare-crazy.

12.

Fact is compressed to
crescent moon as bull
“thick of horns, perfect of stature”
which butts the wide sea to swelling.

Then itself swells to womb
bearing wild fruit
of ontological imagination.

Organic consequence
of affection expanded
to puzzling it out

yet sticks to the mechanism
of the subject
perceiving,

and to the hand
that fashions ideas
growing out of hand.

Motionless
first-fashioned eye
of the primal god

is seen as sphere,
as enigma
breathing broad
and tranquil.

13.

Minds of somber tinge
berth cosmogonic reveries,

roused by thunder
belching from the belly
of a hidden god,

“battle-field weaned
against excess of tenderness.”

By fear of prophecy
he has turned monster of insensibility,
consuming smaller gods—

Only to increase confusion within him.

Accidence of thunder
is followed to distraction,
and voices of the smaller gods
issue out to intrude upon
rudimentary grammar,

which affects the belly, hits the brain.

A stone in swaddling clothes
is mistaken for a child-god
and consumed

(as fire “consuming”
and “bringing to light”)

A congruous beauty of war, at war.

Faces, half-chiseled stone,
claw upward
on the net of his own perfection.

14.

Our eye, compass-drawn
along wide convex of ocean,
sees only blue touching blue
at innumerable points

on this portion of the general sphere.

The heart, fed from the center
of habitual energy,
bounds in recognition

(temporary obliteration
of convention),

though soon the heart's arc veers
toward floating generality.

Convention deadens the familiar,
turning it lead-blue,
and we must administer
a strong blow to the cheek,
so that circulation
will begin again.

Wings of the dove (o, had I them)
begin to flutter
in cupped hands

as blood moves to the place of conflux.

The creatures again emerge,
from a swamp. Algae-covered,
their features take on
the aspect of the half-formed.

They exhale a gas
that when illuminated by moonlight
gives each a globe-like nimbus.

They are advancing toward us,
unaware of us—
observers threatened
at the thought of this recurrence.

Impulse from the world
has struck against the organism,
and circular inspiration
is trimmed,

to darkness.

MARJORIE WELISH

RESPECTED, FEARED, AND SOMEHOW LOVED
SONG

RESPECTED, FEARED, AND SOMEHOW LOVED

In the long run we must fix our compass,
and implore our compass,
and arraign our shadow play in heaven, among the pantheon
where all the plea-bargaining takes place.

Within the proscenium arch,
the gods negotiate ceaselessly,
and the words he chooses to express the baleful phrase
 dare to be obsessed
with their instrumentality. Please send for our complete catalogue.

As in the days of creation, the clouds gossip and argue, the gods waver.
The gods oversee such unstable criteria as fourthly, fifthly.
The rest are little timbral touches.
The gods waver. To reiterate a point, the gods oversee
the symposium on the life raft—a crazed father, a dead son;
 an unwarranted curtailment of family.

Part of the foot, and thus part of the grace splinter in dismay,
and the small elite of vitrines where our body parts are stored
die in a plane crash in Mongolia.
Why didn't someone do something to stop the sins of the climate,
 and earlier,

why did not someone rewrite the sins of the vitrines, the windows
shipwrecked icily, the windows called away?

SONG

Would it be unreasonable, drunk, leprous
to talk about psychoanalysis' secret, folded place
of appreciation, its dishevelled rose
mostly in silence?

Would it be reasonable, if too remorseful,
to say that the intent seems to be connoisseurship
within the breast of mental disorder,
royal or midnight, unreservedly
distraught goodness of persons
who are thereby left abstruse?

In view of what I have said before,
would it be unreasonable, drunk
as early after the second subtle year
of borrowed language,
to talk about psychoanalysis' secret, folded place
of invagination, whereby the task seems to be appreciating
the quality of mental disorder, not solving
the languid mental "stir and heave"
of persons tragically unfitted for life?

ROBERT TEJADA

TWO PIECES

VAULT'S NIGHT

As if still awake / daybreak / a brisk walk
O moon my pin-up,

chronometer

and this inscription in heliotrope
essentially chiseled I suppose
out of a rhythm just transgressing
a soliloquy whose logic
lunches on the blood of lunation

and any keeper of Cybele's House
no doubt may sup her generous fare
will bring the cup to yr lips
and toast to you who are
indeed just as comestible
as whiting and ricecakes
bread & dates & goatsmilk

would imitate her infant's mouth
around mother's tit to come all death-rattle
over himself and a belly twice knotted
so as to parallel a speech more than zero
to himself or visible as a creature
in language / momentous kisses
of what incubus whose tongue
down the throat inserted to simulate
descent? Charybdis
now called Galofalo off the coast
of Messina

by whose inertia any stasis
in mother's discourse is negated
& by whose endless process is this becoming
of difference and absence

so elongated the length is of the mind
(waist-deep giant steps in snow)
will surpass certain limits even
so and yet these cavities in which entire lives
progress and of which I am utterly ignorant

(anyhow what's left of that tenement
on the corner of Attorney and Stanton
human head sinking
as if whose last breath
quicksand)

To say the relationship between the given point X and its plane Q share a certain likeness to “blue” signified not by *blue* but a nude reposed at his window, the verb *to be*, or simply the glass of seltzer he left untouched at the Savanna Cocktail Lounge is to arrive then at said X taking the mean of all probabilities of blue to which *streetlamp*, *moon*, and *Thelonious Monk* comprise the empty set and in order finally to calculate the abstract *undress* one must approach the intellect, if you will, by way of quotient X whose quantifier A is the emotive tautology when A equals no members of the set: “All moons are blue”.

PETER GIZZI

FROM ANTIQUA LINGUA

for M.J.H.

*Beauty is only the first
touch of terror we can still bear.*
Rilke

ETHOS

He looked for more, his life providing less than he was promised. He believed in much, but was shown little of what he had hoped. But, still there was more, though less than he needed to secure his happiness. Although in his confusion pain provided his only real sensation of being, he was good, but not too good, but not altogether bad, he proceeded *to be*....

HOMOIOS

In the extreme, either
sinner or saint, being
Greek it was neither; but
both as it were in us. Being
like him or her it was deep,
it was complete. We could see
them in us so we could learn.
It was us who feared this outcome
of events—in any event we learned.
It was pleasing, it was tragic,
it fulfilled our fears in our-
selves being the mean, not the
extreme, being *both*. We are real.

ATÉ

is a hungry eye
is wanton talons
at first, an itch
inconspicuous
development of confusion's
constant ache of dislocation
into the paralysis

of derangement.

by day he tried to undo
the violence of his dreams
in twilight he edified his
wrecks to his own designs,
characters sighing, shrieking
and swooning every which way
and he was not enlightened,
dissecting the ethic of his
own shortcomings. At last
the rope swung cryptically.
He suffered a defect in his
cast, the conflict of con-
tradiction, the madness of
wisdom that he was myth
beautiful and tragic.

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